

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 3, 2007

The Honorable John P. Murtha  
Chairman  
House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
Room H-149 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable C.W. Bill Young  
Ranking Member  
House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Murtha and Ranking Member Young:

As you prepare to mark-up the Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Appropriations Bill, we write to express our strong support for the *Virginia*-class nuclear attack submarine (SSN) program.

In intelligence gathering, special operations, surveillance, reconnaissance and deterrence, the *Virginia*-class SSN is the platform of choice for our combatant commanders. With its unprecedented stealth capabilities, firepower, and versatility, the *Virginia*-class is an unquestioned asset to our naval fleet and national security. Yet, our nation will build only one submarine a year until 2012 under the Navy's current 30-year shipbuilding plan. Based on the Navy's own stated force requirements, this will leave our nation with fewer than the 48 SSNs we need for a 14-year period between 2020 and 2033, with a low of 40 ships from 2028 to 2029.

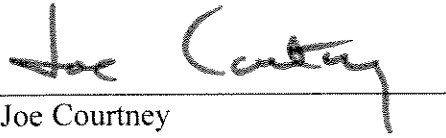
We are deeply concerned about the impact that this will have not only on our long-term national security, but also on our domestic submarine industrial production base. The *Virginia*-class program is a true shipbuilding success story, especially in light of challenges seen in other shipbuilding programs. Again and again, the talented workforces at Electric Boat and Northrop Grumman Newport News have exceeded expectations by delivering submarines that are on budget, on schedule and performing at record-breaking levels.

The most recent and advanced boat to enter the fleet, the USS HAWAII (SSN 776), was delivered to the Navy with 2 million fewer man-hours, ahead of schedule, and with construction and design efficiencies that are helping to bring costs down. The shipyards and the industrial base have made tremendous progress towards meeting the Navy's goal of bringing the cost down to \$2 billion per boat by FY2012. However, economies of scale demonstrate that the most effective way to bring down cost is to increase production to two a year.

We share the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee and the House Armed Services Committee's concern about current naval shipbuilding rates and appreciate their support for the *Virginia*-class program. We are pleased that the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (H.R. 1585) authorizes \$588 million for the initial long lead components for the construction of an additional *Virginia*-class submarine sooner than 2012. As we look to the long-term global security challenges ahead, it is clear that the most important action that we can take in the short term is to increase attack submarine procurement to two a year as soon as possible.

To this end, we respectfully request that you fully fund the House-passed authorization levels for the *Virginia*-class SSN in the FY08 Defense Appropriations Bill. We thank you for your consideration and your work on behalf of our nation's military.

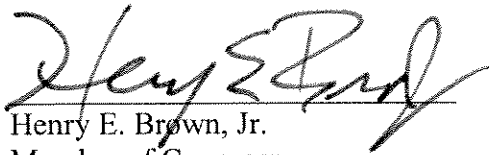
Sincerely,



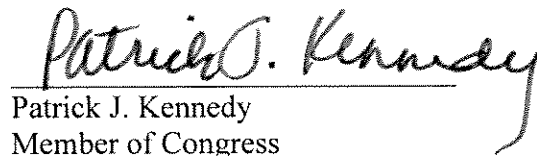
Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress



James R. Langevin  
Member of Congress



Henry E. Brown, Jr.  
Member of Congress



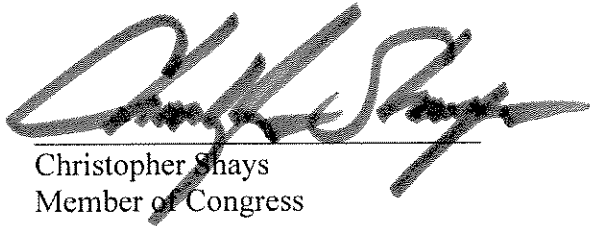
Patrick J. Kennedy  
Member of Congress



Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress



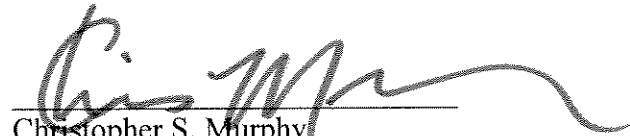
Betty Sutton  
Member of Congress



Christopher Shays  
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Brad Ellsworth  
Member of Congress



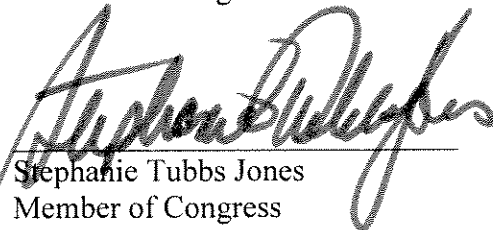
Christopher S. Murphy  
Member of Congress



Thelma D. Drake  
Member of Congress



Bob Goodlatte  
Member of Congress



Stephanie Tubbs Jones  
Member of Congress



Jo Ann Davis  
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J. Randy Forbes  
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